



Child labour legislation in Ethiopia

An analysis of national legislation and policies in Ethiopia that aim to protect children from child labour, with a focus on the coffee sector.

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Abbreviations

CETU	Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions
CRC	Convention on the Right of the Child
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoLS	Ministry of Labour and Skills
MoWCY	Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth
MoWSA	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
NPA	National Plan of Action
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labour

1 Background and context

Child Labour exists in every country and in many economic activities, particularly in the agriculture sector where about 70% of all children in child labour work. As of 2020, 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were estimated to be in child labour globally. Nearly half of those children – 79 million – were in hazardous work (ILO & UNICEF, 2020). Child labour deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity. It harms children mentally, physically, socially, and morally. It interferes with their schooling, preventing them from attending or concentrating in school. In the most serious cases, it may involve children being separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards, or enslaved.

Coffee is identified as one of the agriculture sub-sectors where child labour is predominant. The US Department of Labor lists coffee as a good produced by child labour or forced labour in 17 coffee-producing countries (ILAB, 2022).

As part of its efforts to address child labour in global supply chains, GIZ contracted the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) to assess the child labour prevalence in selected coffee production areas in Ethiopia. This is expected to inform GIZ and its partner ECOM Agroindustrial to set-up and run child labour monitoring and remediation systems to help address sustainability challenges in the coffee supply chain in two areas of Ethiopia, Illubabor and Jimma. To better understand this context and inform an appropriate survey instrument to measure child labour, there was the need to first analyse existing national legislation in Ethiopia to protect children from child labour and the extent to which it aligns with international standards.

1.1 Aims of this report

This report reviews the existing national legislation and policies in Ethiopia that aim to protect children from child labour, and their linkages with relevant international conventions and standards ratified by Ethiopia. The report makes a series of recommendations on hazardous activities related to coffee production on which the child labour prevalence survey in coffee production in Illubabor and Jimma should focus.

1.2 Child Labour and Coffee Cultivation in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian government has put in place national legislation, in which child labour is legally condemned. It has also ratified relevant international conventions, instruments and protocols, including:

- the United Nations (UN) **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, 1989, the most ratified children's convention in the world)
- the ILO **Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour** (1999)
- the ILO **Convention 138 on Minimum Age of Employment** (1973)

These Conventions govern child labour laws, regulate, and help prevent violations of children's rights. Following these, Ethiopia has enacted legislation to protect children from harmful work, such as the labour proclamation of Ethiopia (No. 1156/2019) which establishes the minimum age of 15 years for employment and forbids the employment of a child under the age of 15 years (Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019).

According to the latest national survey of child labour in Ethiopia in 2015, 43% of all children aged 5-17 are in child labour across the country, according to the ILO definition (table 7.2, CSA, 2018). Just over half of children in child labour – corresponding to 23% of all children aged 5-17 – do hazardous work (table 7.3, CSA, 2018).

Child labor is more common in rural areas (49%) than in urban areas (15%) of Ethiopia (CSA, 2018).

Agriculture is the most common sector in which children work in Ethiopia. Among children doing hazardous work in rural areas of Ethiopia, 91% worked in agriculture (table 7.6, CSA, 2018).

While data on child labour incidence in Ethiopia is not available specifically for coffee, like other types of agriculture in Ethiopia, coffee is not exempt from child labour. Coffee production is highly labour-intensive, where almost all work is performed manually due to the characteristics of the tasks associated with the pre-harvesting and harvesting production process (Kruger 2007). Tasks include land preparation, weeding, pruning trees, spraying fertilizers or pesticides, hand-harvesting, and transporting. Children involved in coffee production take on a variety of tasks including picking and sorting berries, pruning trees, weeding, fertilizing, and transporting beans and other supplies. At harvest, coffee producers employ children mainly as pickers of red coffee beans which must be picked immediately upon ripening to maximize their quality (ILO, 2004).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has identified several specific health risks involved in coffee production and harvesting, including injuries from sharp tools, injuries from repetitive movements, lifting heavy loads, pesticide exposure or poisoning, respiratory illness from exposure to coffee dust, and sun and heat exposure. Children are particularly vulnerable to these health risks, as they are still developing, particularly carrying heavy loads, exposure to pesticides and dust, and injuries from sharp objects (ILO, 2004).

1.3 Definition of a child in Ethiopia

According to Ethiopia laws, as well as the regional and international conventions ratified by Ethiopia, a child is anyone below the age of 18 (National Children's Policy, 2017).

The Ethiopian legal system also uses the terms "minor", "young worker" or "young person". For example, Article 215 of the Revised Family Code defines a "minor" as a person of either sex who has not attained the full age of eighteen years old. In addition, Article 89(1) of the Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019 defines young worker as "a natural person who has attained the age of 15 but is below the age of 18 years".

1.4 Child rights in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has ratified the various UN conventions on the rights of children and included articles in its constitution regarding children's basic rights and privileges. Article 36 of 1994 constitution of Ethiopia provides the following as rights of a child:

1. Every child has the right:
 - a. to life
 - b. to a name and nationality
 - c. to know and be cared for by his or her parents or legal guardians
 - d. not to be subject to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or wellbeing
 - e. to be free of corporal punishment or cruel and inhumane treatment in schools and other institutions responsible for the care of children
2. In all actions concerning children undertaken by public and private welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the primary consideration shall be the best interests of the child.
3. Juvenile offenders admitted to corrective or rehabilitative institutions, and juveniles who become wards of the State or who are placed in public or private orphanages, shall be kept separately from adults.
4. Children born out of wedlock shall have the same rights as children born of wedlock.
5. The State shall accord special protection to orphans and shall encourage the establishment of institutions which ensure and promote their adoption and advance their welfare, and education.

2 Working Ages under ILO Convention No.138 and Ethiopian Legislation

The ILO's Convention No.138 (1973) defines three different minimum ages for employment. These are:

- the basic minimum age for admission into employment
- the minimum age applied to hazardous work
- the minimum age applied to light work

According to ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, “the minimum age to be specified in conformity with the Convention shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years”. The convention 138 also states that in countries where the economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed for example developing countries, minimum age for admission into employment could be initially set at 14 years and that of light work could also be set at 12 years.

Ethiopia's Labour Proclamation No. 377/2003 initially set the minimum age for work at 14 years and categorized workers of ages 14 to18 as young workers. This Proclamation No.377/2003 was then repealed in conformity with the international conventions and other legal commitment to which Ethiopia is a party and replaced with **Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019**, which raised the minimum age for employment from 14 years to 15 years.

The **Labour proclamation No.1156/2019**, which remains in force as of the time of writing:

- prohibits employment (for wage or profit) of any person less than 15 years of age
- permits the legal employment of children 15 to 17 years old (referred to as “young workers”), provided they:
 - perform non-hazardous activities
 - work for a maximum of seven working hours per day (compared to the eight working hours for adults)

2.1 “Light work” in Ethiopia

ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No.138) allows children of 13-14 years (12-13 years for developing economies) to perform light work for specific number of hours (less than 14 hours per week), as long as the work does not fall under the scope of the worst forms of child labour and does not interfere with the child's education and physical and mental development. Light work helps develop a child's skills and encourages the child to learn family responsibility. The convention No.138 defines light work as work:

- not likely to be harmful to children's health or development
- that does not prevent children from attending school or from participating in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received

Though light work is not specifically established by the national legislation of Ethiopia, the most recent national survey of child labour conducted by the Central Statistical Agency (2018), measured children's participation in 'light work' in line with based on ILO convention 138, (1973) – i.e. work by children aged 13 and older, which is considered not to harm children's health, development, and schooling and does not exceed maximum allowed working hours.

Table 1: Working Ages under ILO Convention No.138 and Ethiopia Labour Proclamation

Type of work	Minimum legal age at which children are allowed to work according to International Standards (ILO Convention No. 138)	Minimum legal age at which children are allowed to work in Ethiopia (Ethiopia Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019)
Light work	13 - 14 years	13 years
Minimum age of employment	15 years	15 years
Hazardous work	18 years (16 years under certain conditions)	18 years

ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No.138) and Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019

2.2 Child labour in Ethiopia

ILO’s Convention on the “Worst Forms of Child Labour” 1999 (No.182) defines Child Labour as “any work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, dignity and undermines their physical and psychological development”. It includes all work that:

- Is mentally, emotionally, socially and morally dangerous and harmful to children
- Restricts or deprives children of the opportunity to attend school and force children to leave school prematurely
- Makes children combine school and laborious work for excessive periods of time

According to Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (2018), child labour is the engagement of children in prohibited work and, more generally, in types of work to be eliminated as socially and morally undesirable. These are stipulated by the following national legislation: 1994 constitution of Ethiopia and Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019. Article 36 (d) of 1994 constitution of Ethiopia states: “Every child has the right not to be subjected to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or wellbeing”. The provision in the Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019 also prohibits employment of a person less than 15 years. These two pieces of national legislation are aligned and conform with the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the ILO Minimum Age convention, 1973 (No. 138).

In its operational definition for the statistical measurement of child labour for the national child labour survey, the Central Statistical Agency (2018) indicated that children engaged in child labour include all persons aged 5 to 17 years who, during a specified time period, were engaged in one or more of the following categories of activities:

- Children aged 5 to 17 years engaged in *hazardous work* in the reference week
- Children aged 5 to 12 years engaged in any economic activity (including paid employment; self-employment; unpaid family workers) for *at least one hour* during the reference week.

2.3 Worst forms of child labour in Ethiopia

Ethiopia ratified the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) Convention 1999 (No.182) in 2003. Its provisions were codified into national law as part of the Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019.

Article 3 of the Convention defines the WFCL as follows:

- **all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery**, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for **prostitution**, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for **illicit activities**, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs
- work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (**hazardous work**)

The first three category of the Worst forms of child labour (i.e., 1, 2 and 3 above) are known as the **unconditional** forms of child labour and are prohibited without regard to the age of the child, the nature of the tasks executed, the conditions and circumstances in which those tasks are executed, etc.

The fourth category, which describes “work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of the children,” is generally referred to as hazardous work (ILO Recommendation No. 190). This is a “conditional” worst form of child labour and has to be defined locally, through a nationally defined list of hazardous activities.

In alignment to the ILO Worst Form of Child Labour Convention 1999 (No.182) is Article 18 of 1994 constitution which prohibits against Inhuman Treatment:

- Article 18(1) states: “Everyone has the right to protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”
- Article 18(2) states: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. Trafficking in human beings for whatever purpose is prohibited”
- Article 18(3) states: “No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour”

Also, Article 525 (illicit activities), Article 586 (abduction of a minor), Article 596 (enslavement), Article 597 (trafficking in women and children) and Article 635 (Traffic in Women and Minors) of the Criminal Code are in conformity of the ILO unconditional Worst Form of Child Labour (ILO Convention 1999, No.182).

It should be noted children in the worst forms of child labour are a subcategory of all children in child labour. As part of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, the international community has recognized the urgent need “to eliminate the worst forms of child labour...as well as to end all forms of child labour by 2025”.¹

2.4 Hazardous child labour in Ethiopia

The ILO defines hazardous child labour as, “any work which, by its nature or circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children” (ILO WFCL Convention 1999, No.182). According to ILO Convention 182, the precise nature of those tasks that are prohibited are to be defined and reviewed by each country, through a nationally defined list of hazardous activities.

Article 36 (d) of 1994 constitution of Ethiopia states: “Every child has the right not to be subjected to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be **hazardous or**

¹ See: <https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/goal-8-decent-work-economic-growth/>

harmful to his or her education, health or wellbeing". This prohibition applies to all work undertaken by children, regardless of whether the work is under a contractual relationship, and regardless of whether the work is for payment or other reward.

According to ILO Recommendation No. 190, the following criteria should be taken into account when determining hazardous work conditions of children at the national level:

- a. work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse
- b. work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces
- c. work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads
- d. work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health
- e. work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer

The Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019 states that "the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) now reconstituted to Ministry of Labour and Skills may prescribe the list of activities prohibited to young workers which shall include in particular: work in the transport of passengers and goods; work on electric power transmission lines; underground work in mines and quarries; work in sewers and digging tunnels excavation". However, there is no specific mention of prohibited or hazardous activities in agriculture sector.

In the absence of a national list of hazardous activities, the national child labour survey (CSA 2018) listed the following as hazardous working conditions:

- working long hours (more than 42 hours a week)
- working at night
- working in an unhealthy environment such as extreme temperatures or humidity, exposure to dust, fumes
- carrying heavy loads
- operating heavy equipment
- exposure to dangerous tools
- using unsafe equipment at work (e.g., knives)
- exposure to abuse (physical and psychological abuse)
- working at a height
- exposure to chemicals (spraying or mixing)

3 Legislation on child labour in Ethiopia

While Ethiopia does not yet have specific legislation aimed at protecting the rights of children or against child labour, there are relevant provisions in different pieces of legislation, including the Constitution, the Civil Code, the Criminal Code, the Revised Family Code, and notably the Labour Proclamation.

3.1 The 1994 constitution of Ethiopia

The 1994 Constitution of Ethiopia is the supreme law of the land. The constitution has key provisions regarding child labour which include:

- Article 18 (1-3) of 1994 constitution of Ethiopia has the following provisions that protect children against child labour:

- Everyone has the right to protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
 - No one shall be held in slavery or servitude
 - No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour
- Article 36 (d): Not to be subject to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or wellbeing
 - Article 90 (2): Education shall be provided in a manner that is free from any religious influence, political partisanship or cultural prejudices

3.2 The Civil Code of Ethiopia

The Civil Code of Ethiopia (1960) recognizes and provides sanctions for the exploitation and abuse of a child. Article 2052 of the Civil Code states that failure to educate or supervise any person under one's charge results in extra-contractual liability. In addition, although not directly related to child labour but nonetheless relevant in child labour context, the Civil Code addresses registration of children at birth and the issuance of birth certificates (Article 3361). Birth certificates guarantee children's right to identity, provides proof of legal identity and age, and could help protecting children from child labour, abuse and exploitation. Where children have birth certificates, it makes age checks possible for employers and labour inspectors. This proof is necessary for laws setting a minimum age for employment to be effective (UNICEF, 2019).

3.3 Revised Family Code of Ethiopia

The Code provides for the protection of minors defined under Article 215 as "a person of either sex who has not attained the full age of eighteen years". The Revised Family Code imposes a duty on guardians and care givers to ensure the safety and welfare of the child's physical and intellectual development. Regarding child labour, Article 195(2) of the Code specifies the revocation of adoption where the adopter instead of looking after the adopted child as his own child enslaves the child, engages the child in immoral acts for gain, or handles the child in any other manner that is detrimental to his future.

3.4 The Criminal Code of Ethiopia

The Criminal Code Proclamation No.414/2004, which came into effect in 2005, incorporates provisions protecting children from all forms of abuse and exploitation including child labour. It includes provisions criminalizing child labour in general as well as the worst forms of child labour as described above. More specifically, Article 525 (illicit activities), Article 586 (abduction of a minor), Article 596 (enslavement), Article 597 (trafficking in women and children) and Article 635 (Traffic in Women and Minors) of the Criminal Code protect children from all form of abuse.

3.5 The Anti-Trafficking Proclamation and Overseas Employment Proclamation

The Anti-Trafficking Proclamation No. 909/2015 has evolved in the light of Ethiopia's international commitments. The objective of the proclamation is to prevent human trafficking with a special focus on child trafficking. The Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2015 also prohibits the recruitment of any person younger than 18 years for employment in overseas (Article 42/3d).

3.6 Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019

Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 (which supersedes the predecessor proclamation, No. 377/2003) prohibits the employment of persons under age 15 (Article 89(2) and prohibits the employment of young

workers in activities that endangers their lives or health (Article 89(3). It further sets a maximum number of working hours for young workers at seven hours per day (Article 90) and prohibits the employment of young workers for night work (defined as 10PM to 6AM), overtime work, work on weekly rest days and on public holidays (Article 91, Sub Article 1-4). Article 89(4) indicates that the Ministry of Labour and Skills may prescribe the list of activities prohibited to young workers, which shall include in particular:

- Work in the transport of passengers and goods by road, railway, air and internal water ways, dock sides and warehouses involving heavy weightlifting, pulling or pushing or any other related type of labour
- Work connected with electric power generation plants, transformers or transmission lines
- Underground work such as mines and quarries
- Work in sewers and tunnel excavation.

While the **Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019** prohibits the employment of young workers for night work, it does not take into consideration children working at non-community environment/setting such as farm, bush or field, etc. This omission conflicts with ILO guidance, where night work by children in any environment is considered hazardous.

4 Enforcement of Child Labour Laws in Ethiopia

The government of Ethiopia has set up institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labour. Key agencies responsible for child labour law enforcement include: The former Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) was reconstituted as the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS), and the former Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth (MoWCY) was also reconstituted as the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA). In addition, the Office of the Attorney General was reconstituted as the Ministry of Justice.

Table 2: Agencies Responsible for Child Labour Law Enforcement in Ethiopia

No	Agency	Role
1	Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS)	Conducts labour inspections of formal worksites through its regional Bureaus of Labour and Skills. Through its National Referral Mechanism, coordinates referrals of survivors to social services providers.
2	Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Addresses child trafficking and assists vulnerable children through its Special Child Protection Units in Addis Ababa and other major cities. Refers cases to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA).
3	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA)	Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children referred to by other agencies and monitor alleged violations of child protection laws, including the worst forms of child labor. MoWSA also maintains rehabilitation centers and coordinates foster families for children rescued from the worst forms of child labor.
4	Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes criminal violations of child labor laws, including through its Special Investigative Unit for Women and Children.

Source: U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2021: Ethiopia.

4.1 Government policies and programmes for the prevention of child labour

Further to the ratification of conventions and proclamation of national legislation, the government of Ethiopia also addresses child labour issue through policies, programmes and national action plans. Some of these are directly related to child labour, while others are indirectly linked to root causes or potential consequences of child labour.

Table 3: Government Policies related to Child Labour in Ethiopia

No	Policy	Description
1	National Education and Children's Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2017 National Children's Policy aims to promote and protect children's rights and welfare, prevent and eliminate child trafficking and child labour as well as domestically support orphans and vulnerable children. The policy further advocates access to quality primary and secondary schooling, education in rural areas and for out-of-school youth Ethiopian Education Sector Development Roadmap (2018–2030), aim is to make education free and compulsory The National Technical & Vocational Education & Training Strategy also aims to improve access to vocational education for girls and out of school children. The government has not included child labour elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Roadmap, the National Technical & Vocational Education & Training Strategy, or the National Children's Policy.
2	National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2021–2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2016 – 2020 National Action Plan focused on prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration through the following seven goals: (1) create awareness in society, (2) conduct studies to gather information for evidence based program designs, (3) reduce vulnerability, (4) strengthen law enforcement, (5) strengthen structural arrangement and build implementation capacity, (5) increase opportunities for education, (6) create decent work, and (7) reintegration and improve livelihoods. The 2021-2025 NPA includes guidelines on child labour identification, withdrawal, reintegration, and education. The NPA was launched in June 2021 and its implementation is overseen by the National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.
3	National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2015-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons critically examines the legal and institutional frameworks as well as responses related to human trafficking. The action plan serves to map the existing gaps that currently impede the combat against human trafficking. The objective is to provide guidance based on international best practices for action against human trafficking and the institutional structures and inputs needed to effectively address this issue.
4	National Social Protection Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Social Protection Policy of Ethiopia focuses on the promotion of productive safety nets, employment opportunities and improvement of livelihoods, social insurance, increased equitable access to basic social services and provision of legal protection and support for citizens exposed to abuse and violence. The child labour issue is addressed in the fourth focus area where one of the implementation strategies is to expand school feeding programs to retain children in school and avoid child labour

Source: U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2021: Ethiopia and Centre for Evaluation and Development (2020)

Table 4: Key Child Labour programmes implemented in Ethiopia from 2017

No	Program	Description
1	Government of Ethiopia Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, the Ministry of Education continued the Comprehensive, Inclusive Learning and Development–School Feeding Project (CHILD-SFP), in 499 schools in 5 regional states: Oromia, Amhara, Sidama, Somali, and Afar. The government established an initiative to provide temporary shelter for destitute urban children. The shelter provides basic services, including psychosocial support, life skills, education, and training, to enable children's reintegration into society. The initiative is part of Ethiopia's national reform agenda.
2	Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, CETU partnered with the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions to Launch the "Combating Modern Slavery in Ethiopia" project that looks at reducing the prevalence of children in slavery through prevention, restoration, and capacity strengthening.
3	World Vision Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes Effective Approaches in Ending the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2019–2022), an international program designed to test and measure innovative approaches to reduce the worst forms of child labour.
4	World Bank-Funded Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ethiopia General Education Quality Improvement Programme for Equity (GEQIP-E) (2017–2022). This was a programme that worked with the Ministry of Education to improve education quality and access. The aim of the project is to “assist the government of Ethiopia in improving internal efficiency, equitable access, and quality in general education”. Among other aspects, the project focuses on addressing the issue of over-enrolment in the first grade, promoting grade progression at an early stage of education, reducing dropouts, advocating equity in access to and quality in general education as well as improving student learning
	UNICEF-Funded Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF-funded programmes to improve social safety nets and access to education. These programmes include Child-to-Child and Accelerated School Readiness programs, which extend educational opportunities to internally displaced children, and the Integrated Safety Nets Program (2017–2023). UNICEF, the Swedish International Development Agency, and MoLS also jointly fund the Urban Productive Safety Net Program, which aims to build upon efforts to address nutritional and educational outcomes in Amhara and Addis Ababa through cash transfers and linking participants to basic social services.

Source: U.S. Department of State. 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report for Ethiopia and Centre for Evaluation and Development (2020)

Ethiopian policies and programmes response to child labour addresses several important aspects necessary to eliminate child labour. In spite of this, 42.7% of children aged 5 to 17 years were engaged in child labour in the country (CSA, 2018) and some policy challenges remain.

4.2 Agencies coordinating action related to child labour

The government has set up structures to coordinate its efforts to address child labour. These include National Steering Committees, MoLS National Forum to Eliminate the Worst Forms, National Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling Mechanisms and National and Regional Task Forces on Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

Table 5: Role of government Coordination Bodies on Child Labour in Ethiopia

No	Coordinating Body	Roles and description
1	National Steering Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes the National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which coordinates activities on the worst forms of child labor. Members include MoLS, MoWSA, and the Ministry of Education. Also includes the National Steering Committee Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children, which develops action plans and coordinates activities to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
2	MoLS National Forum to Eliminate the Worst Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses the worst forms of child labour at the national level.
3	National Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for the creation of policies and strategies for the prevention of smuggling and trafficking in persons and issuing directives. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, and includes representatives from the Federal Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Peace, MoLS, the Refugees and Returnees Affairs Agency, MoWSA, the Commission of Job Creation, the Ministry of Health, the Federal Police Commission, the National Bank, the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency, the National Intelligence and Security Services, regional governments, the Civil Societies Agency, and religious institutions. Also oversees 10 working groups that specialize in multiple anti-trafficking in persons sectors, including a Women and Children Support and Protection Working Group.
4	National and Regional Task Forces on Orphans and Vulnerable Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote children's rights; chaired by members of the federal government and state ministers and led by the MoWSA in all nine regional capitals and two city administrations.

Table 6: International standards on child labour enshrined in Ethiopia legal system

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	National legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article Articles 4(1), 89(1), 89(2), 89(3), and 185 of the Labour Law Proclamation No. 1156/2019
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 36.1(d) of the 1994 Constitution; Articles 89(3) and 89(4) of the Labour Law Proclamation No. 1156/2019
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 36.1(d) of the 1994 constitution Articles 89(3), 89(4) and 186(1) of the Labour Proclamation No.1156/2019 Directive on Prohibited Occupations for Young Workers
Prohibition of Forced Labour	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 18(3) of the Constitution Article 596 of the Criminal Code Article 3(1), 3(2) and 4(1) – 4(3) of Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No.1178/2020
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 18(2) of the Constitution Articles 597 and 635–637 of the Criminal Code Articles 3(1)–3(5) and 4(1) of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178-2020
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles 634–636 of the Criminal Code Articles 3(1)–3(5) and 4(1) of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178/2020
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 525 of the Criminal Code Articles 3(1)–3(5) and 4(1) of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178/2020
Compulsory Education Age	Yes		Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI), 2013 – 2017 E.C. 2020/21 – 2024/25 G.C
Free Public Education	Yes		Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI), 2013 – 2017 E.C. 2020/21 – 2024/25 G.C

Source: U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2021: Ethiopia and The Federal Ministry of Education, 2021

As can be seen from the table above, the Ethiopian government already has both legislation and several policies and programmes in place to address child labour. However, a lack of resources and poor coordination among state agencies hampers the government’s ability to enforce child labour laws (US Department of Labour, 2021).

5 Conclusions and recommendations

Ethiopia has many national laws (Ethiopian Constitution, Revised Family Code, Labour Law, Criminal Code, Civil Code, Anti-Trafficking Proclamation and Overseas Employment Proclamation) and has ratified several international standards necessary to protect children from child labour. Ethiopia's legislation protecting children from child labour is generally aligned with international standards. However, there are gaps/inconsistencies which need to be addressed. These include:

- A key tool in protecting children from hazardous work is the national list of hazardous work prohibited for children (under 18 years). However, even though the Ministry of Labour and Skills is supposed to prescribe the list of activities prohibited to young workers, there is no specific Hazardous Activities Framework enshrined in law.
- The maximum allowed number of hours (7 hours/day) worked by children aged 14-17 is higher than ILO recommendation.
- Inadequate resources and coordination hamper the enforcement of existing legislation.

It is recommended that Ethiopia, through the Ministry of Labour and Skills, develops a Hazardous Activities Framework (HAF), including for the agricultural sector where many rural children work. As set out in the ILO minimum age convention 138 and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and their respective supplementing Recommendations (Nos. 146 and 190), a national Hazardous Activity Framework should detail a list of tasks prohibited to all children under 18, including specifying the maximum allowed working hours for children of different age groups. There is also the need to strengthen the capacity of agencies responsible of enforcing existing legislation, both in terms of technical knowledge, financial and logistical capacity, as well as to ensure effective coordination.

In the context of this assignment and in alignment with 2015 Ethiopia National Child Labour Survey, the following categories of work by children will be considered as "child labour" in the survey questionnaires used to assess the prevalence of child labour in these coffee-growing areas:

Child labour

Employment (for pay or profit) of any child aged below 15 years

Work for **more than the maximum allowed working hours** for each age group:

- **Age 5-12:** > 1h per week
- **Age 13-14:** >2h per day; OR >14h per week
- **Age 15-17:** >7h per day; OR >42h per week

Any of the following hazardous activities below 18 years:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land preparation (including clearing of land, felling and chopping trees, removing tree stumps and burning) • Exposure to fire or flames (burning cleared land, burning bush, etc.) • Working in extreme heat or cold • Exposure to coffee dust • Carrying heavy loads • Operating heavy equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using dangerous tools or unsafe equipment at work (e.g., machete, knives) • Exposure to abuse (e.g., psychological, or physical abuse) • Working at dangerous height (e.g., climbing tree higher than 3 meters) • Exposure to chemicals (e.g., pesticides spraying or mixing) • Working at night (between 10PM and 6AM) • Work for long hours (see thresholds above by age group) |
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